



HAMILTON COUNTY

Regional Planning Commission

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Blue Ash
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Loveland
Madeira
Milford
Montgomery
Mount Healthy
North College Hill
Norwood
Reading
St. Bernard
Sharonville
Silverton
Springdale
Village of Indian Hill
Wyoming

Villages

Addyston
Amberly Village
Arlington Heights
Cleves
Elmwood Place
Evendale
Fairfax
Glendale
Golf Manor
Greenhills
Lockland
Mariemont
Newtown
North Bend
Terrace Park
Woodlawn

Townships

Anderson
Colerain
Columbia
Crosby
Delhi
Green
Harrison
Miami
Springfield
Sycamore
Symmes
Whitewater

Memo

To: Board of County Commissioners
Economic Development Task Force
First Suburbs Consortium

Copy: Municipalities and Townships in Hamilton County

From: Ron Miller

Date: September 14, 2005

Re: Shared Public Service Delivery

The attached report, "Inventory of Shared Public Service Delivery", documents local government service sharing agreements in Hamilton County as well as government alliances for achieving mutual interests such as advocacy, training, and capacity building. The report also identifies opportunities for additional shared service delivery in Hamilton County based on recent survey responses. The appendix provides a summary of all government services provided by Hamilton County.

The report has been prepared in response to interest in the consolidation and sharing of public service delivery as expressed by:

- Board of County Commissioners' 2005 Goals
- Economic Development Task Force
- Hamilton County 2030 Plan Recommendations
 - Initiative 9: Collaboration on countywide issues
 - Initiative 10: incentives for better collaborative decision making
 - Initiative 30: Coordinated planning and infrastructure
- First Suburbs Consortium Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee
- Ohio House Bill 66 Section 557.12.01

This report serves as a foundation for compliance with House Bill 66, which (for counties and cities of at least 100,000 population) requires submittal of reports to the State Auditor by October 1, 2005 describing efforts to coordinate or consolidate services. More specifically, the Bill requires description of:

- county efforts to reduce costs by consolidating services and engaging in regional cooperation
- cost savings resulting from consolidation of services and regional cooperation
- the county's future plans with respect to consolidating services, engaging in regional cooperation, and financing of operations that serve all political subdivisions (e.g., purchasing, construction, fire, law enforcement, water, sewer, solid waste, etc.)
- the county's efforts to analyze how future consolidation efforts would impact costs and affect existing collective bargaining agreements, or a timeline for completing such analyses.



HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO
**Inventory of
Shared Public Service Delivery**

September 27, 2005

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(Excerpts from “Know Hamilton County”, (The League of Women Voters	
of the Cincinnati Area Education Fund, 2003)	

I. SUMMARY

This report identifies local government service sharing agreements in Hamilton County that provide effective and affordable service delivery. It also documents intergovernmental cooperation agreements between communities for planning, business development, professional training, and advocacy.

In Hamilton County, there is a wide variety of shared public service agreements in place and an equally large number of local government alliances for various purposes. Community leaders consider many different factors when deciding whether to create a joint agreement for public services or to join an alliance of local governments. The most important issue is often the potential savings of sharing service across jurisdictions. Communities sometimes find that by cooperating with one another, they can both increase the quality of service provided to residents at the same time they provide it more cheaply.

Local leaders struggling to balance government budgets are also driven into cooperative arrangements by escalating outside costs. Health insurance premiums are an example of this issue. The Center for Local Government—an alliance of communities focused on improving public service delivery—has a successful joint health insurance program that is motivated by the need to hold costs down for insuring employees. This one program collectively saves participants hundreds of thousands of dollars every year, and can make the difference in being able to provide public employees good health insurance, or providing either poor insurance or crippling participants with premium expenses.

Unlike some states (New Jersey, Pennsylvania), Ohio does not have state-level incentives for communities to engage in cooperative public service provision. It is left to individual communities to decide if the potential savings from building collaborative service agreements is worth the effort. When the current state budget was in committee review, there was a proposal to include incentives for local jurisdictions to consolidate public service delivery. This proposal did not survive in the final budget, although there is a requirement for counties and large cities to report on existing shared service arrangements.

The following table summarizes the extent of shared public service delivery and intergovernmental cooperation in Hamilton County.

SUMMARY TABLE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION IN HAMILTON COUNTY
Jurisdictions Participating in Shared Public Service Delivery

	GOVERNMENT SERVICE AGREEMENTS										GOVERNMENT ALLIANCES						
	Building Inspections	CAGIS	Communications Center	Community Development	General Health District	Greater Cincinnati Water Works	Metropolitan Sewer District	Rural Zoning Commission	Sheriff	Stormwater Mgt. Dist.	Center for Local Government	Chamber of Commerce	First Suburbs Consortium	Mill Creek Watershed Council	OKI	Township Association	Ohio Municipal League
Addyston	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Amberley Village	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Anderson Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Arlington Heights	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Blue Ash	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cheviot	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cincinnati	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cleves	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Colerain Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Columbia Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Crosby Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Deer Park	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Delhi Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Elmwood Place	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Evendale	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fairfax	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Forest Park	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Glendale	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Golf Manor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Green Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Greenhills	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Harrison	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Harrison Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Indian Hill	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lincoln Heights	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lockland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Loveland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Madeira	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Marionmont	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Miami Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Milford	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Montgomery	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mt. Healthy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Newtown	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
North Bend	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
North College Hill	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Norwood	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reading	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sharonville	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Silverton	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Springdale	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Springfield Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
St. Bernard	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sycamore Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Symmes Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Terrace Park	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Whitewater Township	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Woodlawn	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wyoming	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Data source: Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission

Government Service Agreements

The summary table lists ten government agencies that directly provide services to communities through contracts or cooperation agreements. Through such agreements, communities have voluntarily consolidated public service delivery to enable lower costs or increased service levels.

Other shared or consolidated public services are provided to the entire county as a result of an agency's jurisdictional authority (often enabled state statutes supported by tax levies). Some examples of countywide government services not requiring cooperation agreements include:

- library services provided by the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County
- human services provided by Hamilton County Department of Jobs and Family Services
- transportation services provided by SORTA
- environmental services provided by Hamilton County's Department of Environmental Services and the Soil and Water Conservation District
- housing services provided by Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority
- safety services (provided to townships) by the Hamilton County Sheriff
- planning services (provided to townships) by Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission

A comprehensive description of all countywide government services is included in the Appendix to this report.

Government Alliances

The summary table also lists nine government alliances that provide planning, communication and coordination, advocacy, professional training, and community improvement opportunities to participants. The government alliances provide shared services but not in the traditional sense of public services related to fire, water, safety, etc. Instead, the government alliances provide forums for intergovernmental cooperation on a wide variety of issues. Most of the government alliances are described in the Appendix to this report. Some of the alliances have resulted in new alliances to implement specific mutual goals. Examples include the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission's development of the Planning Partnership, the Local Alliance for Nature and Development, the Hamilton County Caucus of OKI Representatives, the First Suburbs Consortium of Southwest Ohio, and Hamilton County's creation of a Convention Facilities Authority in conjunction with the City of Cincinnati.

II. ADDITIONAL SHARED SERVICE DELIVERY

The summary table only provides a partial picture of the shared service delivery in Hamilton County – primarily those services from public agencies with jurisdictions that cover the entire county or the majority of the county. The following lists identify additional types of shared public service delivery not shown in the summary table:

Joint Fire Districts

Most of Hamilton County's 49 jurisdictions provide their own fire service. All fire districts in Hamilton County follow political boundaries except for the following joint districts involving 14 communities.

- Madeira-Indian Hill Joint Fire District
- Deer Park-Silverton Joint Fire District
- Little Miami Fire District encompasses Newtown, Fairfax, and Columbia Township
- Loveland-Symmes Township Joint Fire District (not dispatched from Hamilton County)
- Addyston and North Bend are covered by Miami Township Fire Department
- City of Harrison Fire Department covers both the city and township and provides some EMS service in Indiana

Solid Waste Disposal

Many communities contract with a private company for solid waste disposal (garbage pickup, recycling) services. The companies with contracts in Hamilton County are Rumpke and CSI. Communities not listed provide their own solid waste management programs for residents.

Solid Waste Management Contracts in Hamilton County

	Rumpke	CSI
Addyston	X	
Amberley Village	X	
Arlington Heights	X	
Blue Ash	X	
Cleves	X	
Cheviot	X	
Cincinnati	X	
Columbia Twp	X	
Deer Park	X	
Elmwood Place	X	
Evendale	X	
Glendale	X	
Greenhills	X	
Harrison	X	
Lincoln Heights	X	
Lockland	X	
Loveland		X
Madeira		X
Mariemont	X	
Miami Twp	X	
Milford	X	
Montgomery	X	
Mt. Healthy	X	
North College Hill	X	
Norwood	X	
Reading	X	
Sharonville	X	
Silverton	X	
Springdale	X	
Terrace Park	X	
Woodlawn	X	
Wyoming	X	

Data Source: Rumpke and CSI

Special Programs for Shared Public Service Delivery -- Survey Results

HCRPC together with the Center for Local Government (CLG) crafted a survey to gather more detailed information about public service agreements from communities. The survey was first distributed by CLG to its member jurisdictions. HCRPC then distributed two more rounds of the survey—one to First Suburbs Consortium of Southwest Ohio members, and one to the remaining Hamilton County jurisdictions. HCRPC followed up with phone calls to jurisdictions to solicit additional participation. The Local Government Service Agreement Survey included the following questions:

1. Does your community cooperate with other jurisdictions to provide a public service? If so, what are the services and which communities?
2. Does your community cooperate with other jurisdictions on programs that reduce administrative or capital costs? (examples: joint purchase of equipment, collective bargaining for health insurance, coordinated road resurfacing projects)
3. Has your community privatized any services? If so, what are those services?
4. Have you estimated or documented the cost savings of any joint services or programs? If so, what are the savings?
5. What other services would your community consider collaborating with others to provide?

The results in the chart below identify many of the special programs for public services developed in cooperation with various jurisdictions.

Examples of Shared Public Service Delivery
(per survey responses)

	admin service	insurance	other	property maint	public safety	public works	purchasing	road maint
Addyston				X	X			
Cheviot								
Colerain Township	X	X	X				X	
Delhi Township	X		X				X	
Glendale	X	X					X	
Greenhills	X	X		X				
Lockland								
Maderia	X	X			X			
Mariemont				X	X			X
Miami Township					X			
Milford		X	X					
North Bend		X			X			
North College Hill		X					X	X
Sharonville								
Terrace Park		X			X			
Whitewater Township					X			

Data Source: Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission
The Center for Local Government

The summary chart indicates for the 17 communities that participated in the survey if there is an agreement with another jurisdiction or organization for a service. The following tables provide more details from the survey—indicating if a service is privatized, outsourced, or if they are in an arrangement that reduces capital expenditures or administrative costs.

Services which were shared or outsourced the most by participating communities are solid waste management, property maintenance, fire and EMS service, and police. Public safety mutual aid agreements between jurisdictions are all but universal. If one police or fire department requests emergency aid from another, it is provided. The public safety agreements highlighted in this survey go beyond mutual aid, and include situations where one community may contract with another for all their police or fire service.

Administrative and purchase costs that are shared the most are health insurance, liability insurance, and vehicle purchase. The Center for Local Government Health Benefits Cooperative is an especially popular program that 20 Hamilton County communities are enrolled in. Five more jurisdictions participate in a similar joint health insurance program provided by Hamilton County.

Three of the more unusual or innovative agreements are a joint electric and gas utility bid being prepared by Colerain Township, Springfield Township, and Westchester Township, a Delhi Township fire station that is shared with Oak Hills School District for administrative offices, and a shared mobile drug-testing lab between Milford and Miami Township (Clermont County).

Many communities achieved substantial cost savings through their agreements for shared public service delivery. For example, Madeira estimates cost savings of \$50,000–\$75,000 annually through MVRMA insurance pool savings. Mariemont estimates cost savings of approximately \$25,000 annually through shared service agreements for street maintenance with Fairfax and Fire service with Terrace Park.

**Shared Services, Outsourced Services, and Shared Administrative Programs
by Type of Agreement by Participating Jurisdiction**
(per survey responses)

1. Shared Service Agreements (per survey responses)

Addyston

- Water provided to portions of Village of North Bend
- Fire and EMS provided through Miami Township

Columbia Township

- Public works equipment and safety training programs shared with Fairfax and Mariemont
- Contract with three different fire departments for fire and EMS coverage

Madeira

- Joint fire district with Indian Hill

Mariemont

- Street maintenance (seal coating) with Village of Fairfax

- Fire service with Terrace Park

Miami Township

- Fire, EMS mutual aid agreements with adjacent jurisdictions, provide

Terrace Park

- Fire coverage from Mariemont during daytime
- Paramedic service from Miami Township (Clermont County)

Whitewater Township

- Provide fire and EMS service to Village of Addyston

2. Outsourced Services (per survey responses)

Addyston

- Police provided through Hamilton County Sheriff's Department

Columbia Township

- Police service provided by Hamilton County Sheriff

Glendale

- Solid waste management

Greenhills

- Grass mowing for parks, road medians
- Solid waste management

Madeira

- Solid waste management
- Engineering services
- Building inspection services
- Public property maintenance/grounds keeping

Mariemont

- Property maintenance for city parks and road medians

Miami Township

- Police provided through Hamilton County Sheriff's Department

Milford

- Solid waste management
- Public property grounds keeping

North Bend

- Hamilton County Sheriff provides police service
- Miami Township provides fire service
- HCRPC for planning and zoning
- JMA (consultant) for engineering

North College Hill

- Payroll
- Engineering
- Building department

Sharonville

- Solid waste management

Terrace Park

- Solid waste management

3. Cooperation to Reduce Administrative or Capital Costs (per survey responses)

Colerain Township

- Ohio Township Association property and casualty insurance program
- Center for Local Government health benefits cooperative
- Ohio Administrative Services and Ohio DOT joint purchasing programs
- Joint Fire Chief's purchasing programs
- Joint purchase of road salt through Engineer's office
- Preparing a coordinated bid package with Westchester Township and Springfield Township for electricity and gas service

Columbia Township

- Participate in Hamilton County health insurance purchase program for lower rates

Delhi Township

- Joint office supply purchasing through state (office supplies)
- Center for Local Government health benefits cooperative
- Fire station office space is shared with school district as administration office

Glendale

- ChamberHealth insurance program through Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce

Greenhills

- Center for Local Government health benefits cooperative

Madeira

- Participant in Miami Valley Risk Management Association insurance pool for reduced insurance rates

Milford

- Center for Local Government health benefits cooperative
- Work with Miami Township (Clermont County) with mobile lab to meet drug-free workplace requirements—results in reduced worker's comp insurance rate

North Bend

- Purchase health insurance through Hamilton County for lower rates

North College Hill

- Joint purchase of public works vehicles with Mt. Healthy
- Coordinated road resurfacing projects with Mt. Healthy and Cincinnati
- Health insurance purchase through Hamilton County

Terrace Park

- Workers' comp insurance through Ohio Municipal League
- Liability insurance through Ohio Government Risk Management

III. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDITIONAL SHARED SERVICE DELIVERY

Survey Responses

In the survey, each community was asked: “What other services would your community consider collaborating with others to provide?” Responses from the following nine communities provide a sample of opportunities that exist in Hamilton County for additional shared public service agreements.

Additional Shared Services that Communities would Consider (per survey responses)

Addyston

- Joint purchasing agreements for cost savings

Cheviot

- Solid waste management (currently provided by city)

Colerain Township

- Services that would save time or money

Glendale

- Joint fire district with Woodlawn, Lockland, Wyoming, and Lincoln Heights

Lockland

- Public safety service
- Fire service
- Privatizing solid waste management
- Water service

Miami Township

- Programs to reduce health insurance costs

Milford

- Road resurfacing projects
- Extensions of sidewalks
- Vehicle maintenance for small fleets
- More joint bids for private contracts for solid waste mgt
- “Code-Red” emergency notification service
- Shared recreation facilities

North College Hill

- Fire service

Sharonville

- Services or equipment that are specialized or seldom-used in a community—sewer inspection cameras, pumps, long boom arms for maintenance vehicles, etc.

Service Duplication between Cincinnati And Hamilton County

The survey distributed by CLG and HCRPC did not address service directly provided by the City of Cincinnati or Hamilton County. However, as the two largest government organizations in the county, Cincinnati and Hamilton County directly or indirectly duplicate many different services. Some duplication is unavoidable with the current framework for county government established by the Ohio Revised Code (ORC). The elected officials specified by statute have certain duties and responsibilities to the population. Cincinnati as the largest city in Hamilton County, has exercised its authority to create its own departments and agencies to provide the necessary levels of service for such a large urban center.

The following chart illustrates the most significant service overlaps between the City and County, which may provide opportunities for shared service delivery. County services having elected officials as required under the ORC are indicated as such.

Similar Services Provided by Cincinnati and Hamilton County

CITY OF CINCINNATI	HAMILTON COUNTY
Buildings and Inspections Department	Hamilton County Building Inspections Dept.
Public Services Department	Hamilton County Public Works Dept.
Office of the City Manager Economic Development Division	Hamilton County Development Company
Transportation & Engineering	Hamilton County Engineer (elected)
Finance Department	Hamilton County Treasurer (elected)
Law Department	Hamilton County Prosecutor (elected)
Police Department	Hamilton County Sheriff (elected)
Community Development and Planning Dept.	Regional Planning Commission
Board of Zoning Appeals	Board of Zoning Appeals
Community Development and Planning Department (housing programs)	Hamilton County Community Development (housing programs)
Cincinnati Health Department	Hamilton County Board of Health
Cincinnati Human Resources Department	Hamilton County Personnel Department
Cincinnati Department of Public Services	Hamilton Co. Dept. of Environmental Services
Cincinnati Parks Department	Hamilton County Park District
Cincinnati Recreation Commission	

Further complicating this mixture of overlapping agencies and departments are several joint agencies, special districts, and county departments for which there is not a Cincinnati counterpart. These entities provide specialized services that are not provided by Hamilton County's 49 general-purpose governments, and in many cases they result from collaboration between individual jurisdictions. The interrelationships between these different public, civic, and regional organizations is illustrated in the Shared Public Service Delivery and Government Alliances table at the beginning of this report.

IV. ORGANIZATIONS THAT FACILITATE SERVICE AGREEMENTS

Many communities that responded to the survey undertake service agreements with the help of allied organizations. Three of these groups based in Hamilton County are the Center for Local Government, the Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, and the Hamilton County General Health District.

Center for Local Government

The Center for Local Government (CLG) is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization supported through a combination of membership fees, grants from foundations and corporations, and revenues from fee-based services. Its mission is to improve public service delivery by the cities, townships, and villages in the Greater Cincinnati metropolitan area, especially among its member jurisdictions, through improved information exchange, cost reductions, shared resources, inter-jurisdictional collaboration, and new approaches to capital equipment and skills acquisition.

The CLG service sharing programs available to member communities include the following.

The Mutual Aid Pact For Public Works

An outgrowth of The Center for Local Government's Collaboration Committee's discussion in 1993 about the need to develop some mechanism that would allow local jurisdictions to have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities assumed when giving assistance to other jurisdictions in emergency situations.

Capital Asset Financing

In order to provide an alternative to cash purchase or other form of costly financing such as a lease purchase or a small stand alone bond issue, CLG, Seasongood & Mayer LLC, and Peck, Shaffer & Williams LLP created the CLG Capital Asset Financing Program. The program allows several communities to "pool" their borrowing needs in such a manner that they may enjoy better interest rates and lower administrative costs. This allows communities that cannot afford large capital outlay to spread the cost of capital assets over time.

Seasongood CLG Investment Program

The CLG Investment Program is an initiative aimed at improving investment earnings through active investment management. This is an opportunity for jurisdictions to work with a professional money manager and to build a custom-designed investment portfolio.

Health Insurance Benefits Cooperative

Twenty-three members of CLG enrolled their employees in up to three cost effective plans with Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield as part of The Center for Local Government Benefits Cooperative. By pooling employees together, CLG created a powerful bargaining bloc in order to obtain better health insurance rates.

Hamilton County Health Insurance Program

Individual communities may also purchase health insurance through Hamilton County in order to take care of lower premiums and improved coverage due to the County's bidding power. The current participating communities are Columbia Township, Lockland, North Bend, North College Hill, and Symmes Township.

Other health insurance purchase programs are available to Hamilton County communities through the Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Municipal League, and the Ohio Township Association.

Cincinnati USA Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber offers educational and networking opportunities, business resources like directories and mailing lists, and government advocacy to protect and advance the interest of business. The Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber is a private, not-for-profit organization. It is not a government body.

While the majority of the Chamber's 6,000 members are private businesses, there is representation from local governments, public agencies, and civic organizations. As members, these communities are eligible for the following

- ChamberComp - Worker's Comp group rating program
- ChamberHealth - Health insurance program
- Economic Development - Cincinnati USA Partnership
- Workforce Solutions - HR Solutions & job search
- Telecom Savings - Wireless, ADSL and Internet dialup savings

Hamilton County General Health District

The Hamilton County General Health District is a unique organization in that it has jurisdiction over all of the county, but specific authority in many jurisdictions according to contract agreements. All townships and villages fall under the District's authority, and 13 cities have contracts for various services. Cincinnati, Norwood, Springdale, Sharonville, Indian Hill, and St. Bernard have their own health departments. Residents in these cities contact their local officials with public health issues or service needs instead of the County. However, even in these cities, the General Health District may provide specialized services on a contract basis.

Ohio Municipal League

The Ohio Municipal League is a non-profit corporation founded in 1952 by city and village officials that provides statewide association to serve the interests of Ohio municipal government. In addition to lobbying/legislative functions the following special programs and services are available to member communities to reduce administrative costs.

Legal Advocacy Program

In 1984 the OML established a Legal Advocacy Program funded by voluntary contributions of the members. This program allows the League to serve as the voice of cities and villages before the Ohio Supreme Court and the US Appeals and Supreme

Court by filing briefs amicus curiae on cases of special concern to municipal governments.

Workers' Comp. Group Rating Pool

Established in 1991 as the result of a state law change, this program offers members of the League who qualify for and join the pool an opportunity to reduce their annual workers comp premiums. In addition the members receive assistance with claims administration from Gates McDonald and Company, the plan administrator.

Ohio Municipal Joint Self Insurance Pool

Established in 1987 to provide municipal corporations coverage in the areas of general liability including public officials and police, auto liability and property. The pool is an unincorporated tax exempt non-profit organization, governed by its member municipalities. The pool is sponsored by the Ohio Municipal League and administered and operated by JWF Specialty Company.

OML Long Distance Phone Plan

This is a cost savings long distance phone plan administered by First Communications. In addition to lower long distance charges, member cities and villages receive calling cards, itemized billings and the availability of the program for their employees.

V. DRIVING FORCES OF SHARED PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

The competing pressures of budget shortfalls and demand for high quality public services from residents can place local jurisdictions in a nearly impossible situation. Most communities take pride and derive a sense of identity through the services they provide to residents. However, in the face of mounting costs and decreased revenues, sharing or consolidating local services between communities in order to reduce costs, spend tax dollars more efficiently, and maintain or increase service levels, begins to look more attractive to local jurisdictions.

Service consolidation is not without it's problems, not the least of which is the perception that combining services with another jurisdiction is a step toward political merger between the communities. The line between functional (service) consolidation and political consolidation needs to be clearly delineated if the concept is to gain additional support in Hamilton County.

The arguments in favor of consolidating local services—including more efficient use of tax revenue and maintaining service levels—certainly apply to communities in Hamilton County. This is evident in part by the number of service agreements/consolidations already in effect through arrangements between individual communities, and collectively through organizations like the Center for Local Government (CLG).

When considering the question of service consolidation, the argument for tax savings is crucial—elected leaders from each community involved want to know what benefits are possible in terms of money saved and service levels increased. The answer to the question depends on the type of service program involved. In general, a well-designed service sharing program will provide tax savings, increased efficiency and decreased redundancy in services,

and enhanced service planning. Smaller, non-controversial service sharing programs will yield smaller cost savings, but will require little political capital to carry out. Larger controversial programs or consolidations have the potential for great savings but require skilled political leadership to enact.

The need for shared public service delivery has also been identified by the following studies, committees and statutes:

1. Board of County Commissioners 2005 Goals

The most recent Board of County Commissioners budget goals include:

- ...work to encourage consolidation of services with other local governments throughout Hamilton County, including, but not limited to:
- a) Consolidation of the Metropolitan Sewer District
- b) Creation of a countywide one-stop for development opportunities

Reversing population and job loss in Hamilton County is top priority for the Board of Commissioners. Increased shared public services have the potential to have a significant impact on this priority goal by increasing service levels, saving communities money, and improving quality of life. The need for consolidation of services has also been identified by the Economic Development Task Force appointed by the County Commissioners in 2005.

2. Hamilton County 2030 Plan Recommendations

One result of the Community COMPASS process is a set of 30 community initiatives for the future of Hamilton County. Thirteen of these are designated as high-priority items needing immediate attention by community leaders and elected officials. Several of these are relevant to this discussion of shared public service delivery and intergovernmental cooperation.

- Initiative 9: Collaboration on countywide issues
- Initiative 10: Incentives for better collaborative decision making
- Initiative 30: Coordinated planning and infrastructure

3. Hamilton County Planning Partnership Strategic Plan

The Planning Partnership was formed to bring together public sector, private sector, and civic sector organizations engaged in community planning in Hamilton County so that mutual goals related to physical, economic and social issues can be planned for comprehensively and achieved collaboratively. Recently, the Planning Partnership completed a new strategic plan for initiatives. One of the top priorities was to leverage the Partnership's ability to build consensus by getting involved in identifying and facilitating opportunities for shared or consolidated services and savings for local jurisdictions.

4. First Suburbs Consortium of Southwest Ohio Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee

The Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee is promotes collaboration, resource sharing, and idea exchange between FSC member communities for the purpose of economic development, housing improvement, and infrastructure upgrades.

FSC recognizes that problems facing first suburbs are too large and complex to be solved by individual communities and that cooperation will provide more effective and efficient solutions.

5. Am. Sub. H. B. No. 66 Section 557.12.01.

During General Assembly negotiations for the current state budget, it appeared that local jurisdictions were going to experience dramatic cuts in funding for services. While these proposed cuts were restored for this year, it is important for communities to explore ways to reduce their operating costs and dependence on varying levels of state entitlements. The most recent budget contains requirements for counties and cities with 100,000 or more people to submit reports to the State Auditor describing efforts to coordinate or consolidate services. The text of the bill is as follows:

(A) Each county and each city with a population of one hundred thousand or more persons shall submit to the Auditor of State a report on or before October 1, 2005, that describes efforts on the part of the county or city to reduce costs by consolidating services and engaging in regional cooperation, specifies cost savings resulting from consolidation of services and regional cooperation, and describes the county's or city's future plans with respect to consolidating services and engaging in regional cooperation as described in division (B) of this section.

(B) The report described in division (A) of this section shall describe future plans with respect to consolidating services, including, but not limited to, consolidating fire, law enforcement, water, sewer, and solid waste services provided by the county or city. The report shall describe any efforts already undertaken by the county or city to analyze how these future consolidation efforts would impact costs and affect existing collective bargaining agreements. If no such analyses have been undertaken at the time the report is filed, the report shall set forth a timeline for completing the analyses.

The report also shall describe future plans with respect to cooperating with one or more neighboring political subdivisions in the financing of operations that serve all of the subdivisions. The report shall describe the county's or city's future plans, if any, to cooperate with other political subdivisions in the consolidation of purchasing or construction functions.

(C) The report described in division (A) of this section shall be used by the Auditor of State for informational purposes only. The Auditor of State shall have no authority to approve or disapprove any plan described in a report.



**HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO
INVENTORY OF SHARED PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY
APPENDIX**

Hamilton County Government Services

Excerpts from
“Know Hamilton County”
The League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area Education Fund, 2003
<http://www.lwvcincinnati.org/government/KnowHamiltonCoTXT.html>

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FUNCTIONS OF ELECTED COUNTY OFFICIALS

- **Board of County Commissioners** - Approves the annual county budget; adopts an annual appropriation resolution for most county offices; determines tax levies and bond issues for the county; appoints members of various boards and commissions; approves annexations and incorporations; manages real and personal property; employs the county administrator and department directors; implements state regulations pertaining to physical needs of the county (roads, sewers, zoning); may enter into agreements with municipalities, special districts and other counties to “exercise any power, perform any function or render any service” which it considers appropriate.

The Board of County Commissioners meets in formal session Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m., at the Hamilton County Administration Building or at alternate locations in the county. Informal sessions are held on Mondays, at 9:30 a.m. Meetings are open to the public. Meetings are televised on local cable channels. Comments for public hearings can be made through the commissioners’ website.

- **Auditor** - Serves as chief fiscal officer for the county; conducts regular real property appraisals; issues warrants to county treasurer for county expenses.

- **Clerk of Courts** - Enters all orders, decrees and judgments; collects and distributes court costs; keeps records of court dockets and journals; issues and transfers automobile title certificates.

- **Coroner** - Determines the cause of any death not clearly due to natural causes; conducts autopsies, issues death certificates, supervises county morgue and laboratory. Must be a state licensed physician for at least 2 years.

- **Engineer** - Responsible for the county road and bridge system and is engineer for operating townships. Must be a registered professional engineer and surveyor.

- **Prosecuting Attorney** - Prosecutes all complaints, suits and controversies in both Common Pleas and Municipal courts in which the state is a party. Serves as legal advisor to all county officials and boards. county’s chief legal officer. Must be an Ohio licensed attorney. May continue a private practice while in office.

- **Recorder** - Records deeds, mortgages, plats, powers of attorney, proceedings of annexation and municipal incorporation and liens.

- **Sheriff** - Administers county detention and correctional facilities; provides full police protection to those townships which do not have their own police departments. Chief law enforcement officer.

- **Treasurer** - Collects county, local government and certain state taxes; invests county funds; disburses funds from treasury on warrant from the county auditor.

SPECIAL DISTRICTS

State law has authorized the creation of a variety of special districts to serve specific governmental purposes. A special district has an independent budget and means of financing. It is established in response to a need for a specific service not offered already within the boundaries of an existing

governmental unit. Each type of special district is authorized by a separate law; districts are usually single-purpose.

- **Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)** - See Housing.

- **Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District** - The District promotes soil and water conservation, proper land use and the improvement of water quality and resource development by providing free technical assistance to homeowners, units of government, educators and farmers interested in the wise management of these resources and administers the county government soil erosion program. It is governed by a board of 5 supervisors elected to 3-year terms, by the public, at its annual meeting.

- **Hamilton County Solid Waste Management District (SWMD)** - It's purpose is to reduce reliance on landfill through reduction, reuse and recycling programs. The District is responsible for the implementation of the Hamilton County Solid Waste Management Plan and for achieving a 25% reduction in solid waste disposal in Hamilton County. It is divided into three categories: Residential Outreach, Business and Industry Outreach and Education Outreach.

The SWMD is governed by the District Policy Committee which sets policy for the District and ensures proper implementation of the county's Solid Waste Management Plan. There are 4 permanent "statutory" members and 3 revolving members. In Hamilton County, there is also an ex-officio waste industry representative. Committee membership is made up of: the president of the Board of County Commissioners or designee; chief executive of largest municipality or designee; health commissioner with the largest territorial jurisdiction; 1 member representing townships; 1 representing industrial, commercial or waste generator interests; 1 representing general interest of citizens; 1 representing the public; and a waste industry representative. The first 4 are permanent positions. The next 4 can seek two, 2-year terms before having to step down. The 4 permanent members are responsible for appointing new members.

- **Hamilton County Storm Water District (HCSWD)** - In 2003, the Board of County Commissioners established the HCSWD, adopted the Storm Water Management Plan and appointed the County Engineer as Administrator for the District.

It manages Phase II storm water permitting and regulations, and storm water quality on a watershed basis. Forty-five of the 50 jurisdictions, including the 12 townships, are members of this district. The City of Cincinnati and the City of Forest Park each have a Stormwater Management Utility. The District is funded by the member jurisdictions.

An Oversight Board, modeled after the Ohio Public Works Commission Integrating Committee, oversees the District. The Board advises the County Commissioners and the County Engineer and assists with the integration of the District and the District communities. The structure of the Oversight Board is: one County Commissioner; the County Engineer; 2 representing the City of Cincinnati; 2 representing the Township Association; and 2 representing the Municipal League. There are no term limits.

- **Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSD)** - See Sewage Treatment.

- **Miami Conservancy District (MCD)** - Established in 1915, under the provisions of the Conservancy Act of Ohio, MCD built and continues to maintain a flood control system covering nine counties: Butler, Clark, Greene, Hamilton, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, Shelby and Warren. The 3-member

governing body is appointed by the Common Pleas Court.

- **Millcreek Valley Conservancy District** - Created for the purpose of flood protection for the Mill Creek valley. It is the local sponsor for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Mill Creek Flood Protection Project. The 3-member governing body is appointed by the Common Pleas Court.

- **Park District** - See Parks.

- **Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority** - Created through an Agreement between the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, it is charged with the implementation of the Central Riverfront Urban Design Master Plan for the mixed-use redevelopment of Cincinnati's Central Riverfront Area commonly referred to as "The Banks." It is also charged with facilitating the redevelopment of brownfields. These are commercial/ industrial properties in Hamilton County that are environmentally contaminated, or perceived to be contaminated, and are now vacant, abandoned, idle or underutilized.

The Board of Directors has 18 members; 9 appointed by the Mayor of Cincinnati with the advice and consent of City Council and 9 appointed by the Board of County Commissioners for 4-year terms.

- **Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County** - See Public Library.

- **SORTA (Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority)** - See Transportation.

- **Transportation Improvement District (TID)** - See Transportation.

OTHER COUNTY-WIDE ENTITIES

- **Cincinnati Area Geographic Information System (CAGIS)** is a consortium of the land and infrastructure agencies in the City of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Cincinnati Bell and Cinergy. Any organizational component of the city, county, or private utility consortium enterprise members are eligible to receive CAGIS services.

CAGIS' mission is to create a computerized information sharing system that offers a tool to make informed decisions based on shared data within a standard framework. It analyzes geographically related demographic, descriptive and time-dependent information; provides property and land-use information; and provides solutions that will lead to improvements in delivering public services.

CAGIS is managed by a ten-member Board comprised of representatives from the City of Cincinnati (Directors of Buildings, Planning, Public Works and Water Works); Hamilton County (Directors of Administrative Services and the Metropolitan Sewer District, County Engineer and Executive Director/Secretary of the Regional Planning Commission); and Vice Presidents of Cincinnati Bell Telephone and Cinergy.

It is funded by the City of Cincinnati 50% (less Cinergy); Hamilton County 50% (less Cinergy); and Cinergy \$30,000.

- **CLEAR (County Law Enforcement Applied Regionally)** is a countywide computerized police information system, also referred to as RCIC (Regional Crime Information Center).

CLEAR is a resource provided to all law enforcement agencies of Hamilton County regardless of size,

with the purpose of providing modern information technology services to improve the effectiveness of the agencies through more efficient handling, exchange and processing of information. The CLEAR System was developed and is maintained by the Regional Computer Center (RCC). The Project CLEAR Board of Advisors provides direction to the RCC regarding CLEAR activities.

Per recommendations from the Hamilton County Commissioners and the Tax Levy Review Committee, CLEAR is working to reduce the amount of funding required from Hamilton County property owners by, among other things, marketing and selling its services to other local jurisdictions which could potentially benefit from CLEAR's services. Also see Administration of Justice, Law Enforcement.

- **County Dog Warden** - is appointed by the county commissioners; serves as director of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), enforces state dog license laws and seizure and impoundment regulations.
- **Regional Computer Center** is a local government information/network services provider. Information and network services are provided to the City of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, CLEAR and to a few law enforcement agencies outside Hamilton County. 9-member control board: 4 members from county administration, 4 from city administration and 1 citizen chosen by these 8 members.

FINANCES

ADMINISTRATION

County officials, acting as agents of the State of Ohio, are responsible for administering, collecting and distributing property taxes for all local governmental units within Hamilton County, for reviewing all local budgets and for setting property tax rates.

- The **County Treasurer** receives taxes for the county and for local governmental units (not including municipal earnings and liquor taxes), and the County Auditor distributes to the local units the tax money collected on their behalf.
- The **County Auditor** serves as both the chief fiscal officer for the county and the real property assessor for all political subdivisions within the county. As chief fiscal officer, the Auditor is responsible for maintaining the county's centralized accounting, payroll and benefits systems; for auditing payments made on behalf of county agencies and issuing the warrants therefore. The Auditor prepares the general tax list of the county, calculates the voted and unvoted tax rates for real estate and personal property and, once collected, distributes the tax receipts to the appropriate political subdivisions and agencies within the county.

As real property assessor, the Auditor is responsible for a full reappraisal of the over 320,000 parcels of real property in Hamilton County every six years, with an interim update every third year. The last full reappraisal was completed for the tax year, 1999. The Auditor also prepares and maintains a comprehensive set of the county's real estate records that include ownership, appraised value, legal description, dimensions and sketches for each parcel. Along with the Treasurer and President of the Board of County Commissioners, the Auditor serves on the **County Board of Revision**, which hears all complaints on real property and may revise real estate assessments, except those for public utilities.

- The **County Budget Commission**, consisting of the auditor, treasurer and prosecuting attorney, reviews all local government budgets and determines that rates of taxation are adequate to meet expenditures and to retire bonds. The Budget Commission makes sure that tax rates do not exceed

statutory limitations and that provisions for retirement of bonded indebtedness are being carried out properly.

It also receives:

1. the county's share of the state's Local Government Fund (which consists of portions of 3 state-collected taxes: franchise tax, retail sales tax and income tax)
2. the county's share of the Local Government Revenue Assistance Fund
3. the Financial Institutions Tax collected in Hamilton County.

It determines the distribution to be made to governmental units within the county. The commission provides each subdivision with a certificate of its revenues available for the coming year.

TAX LEVY REVIEW COMMITTEE

• The **Tax Levy Review Committee** (TLRC) is a 9-member citizen board, established by the county commissioners in 1995 to study and make recommendations concerning any tax levy request to be put before the voters of Hamilton County. Prior to the formation of the TLRC, commissioners heard from those seeking funds and acted upon the documented financial needs presented by the requesting agency. The TLRC was established to provide independent input to the commissioners and to serve as representatives of the taxpayers of Hamilton County in the levy process.

A Tax Levy Policy was adopted in 1996 to identify the work and "time line" to be observed by the TLRC and the agencies requesting levy funds. Guidelines included in that policy designate the make-up of the TLRC, its responsibilities to the county commissioners and requirements agencies must meet when submitting a request to the commissioners to place a tax levy on the ballot. The Voted Tax Levy Policy has been revised to meet changing requirements in the review process. The policy in effect when this document was printed was adopted in February 2003. The most current policy can be obtained by contacting the office of the Hamilton County Clerk.

COUNTY-WIDE RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAX LEVIES

- The **General Operating Levy** may be used for any general government expenses, such as Sheriff patrols, jail operations, court operations and social services.
- The **Museum Center Debt Service Levy** covers the cost of paying for the debt used to renovate Cincinnati's historic Union Terminal into a museum center.
- The **Children's Services Levy** helps provide funding for investigating reports of child abuse and neglect; protection, aid and housing for abused and neglected children; counseling assistance to families to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect; Juvenile Court's efforts in the review and oversight of child abuse, neglect and dependency cases; and operating Hillcrest Training School for male adolescents.
- The **Health and Hospitalization Services Levy** (including Drake Center and various Drug Court programs) primarily supports long-term care and rehabilitation services at Drake Center. This levy's funds are also spent on county inmate health services and alcohol and drug treatment services.
- A second **Health and Hospitalization Services Levy** (including University Hospital) helps pay for the health and hospitalization services provided to the indigent in Hamilton County, at University and Children's Hospitals. It also provides funding for inmate health services, tuberculosis control services, and alcohol and drug treatment services.
- The **Community Mental Health Services Levy** provides funding for planning, coordinating and evaluation a network of services for the emotionally distressed and for the chronically or acutely mentally ill.

- The **Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Levy** provides support, programs and services to individuals with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities.
- The **Park District Levy** provides funds to operate and maintain county parks.
- The **Computerized Police Information Center Levy** provides funds for the county-wide computerized police information system.
- The **Senior Services Levy** funds are used to provide and maintain a system of in-home care for Hamilton County's elderly, through the development, coordination and implementation of services for older adults.
- The **Zoological Park Services and Facilities Levy** provides funding for the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden to help cover the operating costs at the zoo.

PROPERTY TAX RATES

General Fund (unvoted) 2.26 mills Continuing
 Children's Services 2.77 mills 2006
 Drake Center 1.59 mills 2004
 Mental Health Services 2.74 mills 2007
 Mental Retardation
 and Developmental Disabilities 3.53 mills 2004
 Museum Center Bond Retirement 0.15 mills 2009
 Park District 1.03 mills 2017
 Computerized Police Information Center 0.54 mills Continuing
 Senior Services 1.16 mills 2007
 University/Children's Hospital
 Indigent Health Care 5.39 mills 2006
 Zoo 0.42 mills 2003
TOTAL 21.58 mills

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

LAW ENFORCEMENT

There are 37 municipal and 3 township conventional police departments in Hamilton County, in addition to federal, state and other county law enforcement agencies. The **County Sheriff** is the chief law enforcement officer in the county. With a staff of over 1,000 uniformed and support services personnel, the Sheriff runs the jails and provides primary police services for 10 unincorporated areas and the village of North Bend, courtroom security and service of criminal and civil process for Common Pleas Courts, general security for county court buildings, a centralized Warrant and Criminal Identification Section and numerous countywide law enforcement resources including helicopters, boats, bomb unit, K-9's, horse units, specialized crime scene and computer fraud investigative units. The Sheriff also administers the countywide Regional Enforcement Narcotics Unit (RENU).

Other resources available to all law enforcement agencies in the county are County Law Enforcement Applied Regionally (CLEAR), Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT), Underwater Search and Recovery Unit (USRU) and a Police-Clergy Team (PCT). CLEAR is funded by a county-wide tax levy. It provides immediate information to police officers on missing and wanted persons and on stolen

property, including guns and motor vehicles. The system also interfaces with state and federal law enforcement data systems. The PCT, SWAT and USRU resources are provided through efforts of the Hamilton County Police Association.

- **Public Defenders Office** - The Public Defenders Office provides legal representation for indigents in both felony and misdemeanor criminal cases in Hamilton County. Staff attorneys represent misdemeanants in Municipal Court, criminally accused adults and juveniles in Juvenile Court and non-support defendants in Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts. Representation is limited to those criminal, traffic, or delinquency charges that carry the possibility of incarceration if convicted. Since 1995, three full time staff attorneys have been assigned to the Hamilton County Drug Court. The attorneys play a key role in assuring that the client is aware of his or her rights at every stage of the process and makes informed decisions with an awareness of legal implications and consequences.

The Public Defenders Office maintains a list of almost 200 private attorneys who have signed up to take the more serious felony cases. They are assigned on a rotating “team” panel system to ensure that cases are widely distributed among all willing and qualified attorneys. Services extend through trial level and into any necessary post conviction proceedings, including motions and appeals. These assigned counsel are responsible for felonies and Juvenile Court dependency proceedings and paternity cases.

- **County Prosecuting Attorney** - The Prosecuting Attorney (PA) performs both a criminal and civil law function. The PA may inquire into the commission of crimes in the county; appear before and present evidence and legal advice to the Grand Jury; and prosecute criminal cases on behalf of the State. The PA is also the attorney for county boards and officers, public libraries, township boards and officers and local school districts. There are 120 assistant prosecuting attorneys and 85 staff members to assist in the duties of the office. The PA and assistants practice in all State and Federal Courts and administrative agencies.

- **County Coroner** - The county coroner investigates the cause, mode and manner of sudden and unexpected deaths, particularly those due to violence or otherwise suspicious or unexplained.

COURT SYSTEM

All courts sitting in Hamilton County belong to either the state system or the federal system. Courts in the state system are described on the following page. Two federal courts sit in Cincinnati: The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, Western Division, which serves 10 Ohio counties and tries most cases involving federal laws; and the U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit, which has appellate jurisdiction for Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan and Tennessee.

- **Judges** - Hamilton County voters elect all the judges sitting in the Ohio First District Court of Appeals, the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas and the Hamilton County Municipal Court. Court of Appeals and Common Pleas Court judges are elected in even numbered years; in odd numbered years voters select Municipal Court judges. Judges of the Municipal Court are elected in the seven districts for 6-year staggered terms. Judges are elected on a non-partisan ballot. Nomination is usually partisan. If a vacancy occurs during a term, the Governor appoints a new judge who serves until the next scheduled election.

- **Juries** - Prospective jury members are chosen by lot from lists of registered voters; jury lists so chosen are drawn upon, also by lot, when needed. A grand jury (9 members) hears criminal cases to determine whether an accused person should be held for trial. A trial or petit jury (number varies) hears both criminal and civil cases.

DETENTION AND CORRECTIONS

The Sheriff's Office Corrections Division is responsible for the operation of all adult county detention and corrections facilities. The primary facility is the Hamilton County Justice Center, 1000 Sycamore Street. Secondary facilities are: the Queensgate Correctional facility; 516 Linn Street; and several special program and treatment facilities. The combined daily prisoner population generally fluctuates between 2,000 and 2,200 and is comprised of about 45% pretrial and 55% sentenced inmates. The Corrections Division is also responsible for inmate medical, psychological, educational, social and chaplaincy services and programs.

Juvenile offenders aged 12 to 18 are sent to the Youth Center, 2020 Auburn Avenue, until released to their parents or until their cases are heard in Juvenile Court.

Hillcrest School is the local residential correctional treatment center for adjudicated male juveniles. The residential treatment program for adjudicated female juveniles is located at Talbert House. Convicted juvenile felons may be assigned to the Ohio Department of Youth Services which operates 9 correctional facilities throughout the state.

COURTS

Ohio Supreme Court has final judicial review authority on the state level. Six-year terms, staggered. **7 Judges** elected by voters of Ohio.

Ohio First District Court of appeals primarily a court of judicial review. Six-year terms, staggered. **6 Judges** elected by voters of Hamilton County.

Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas - Six-year terms, staggered.

- **General Division:** Has original jurisdiction in civil cases involving claims of any amount, and in criminal cases involving felonies committed in Hamilton County. Has appellate jurisdiction over cases originating in lower courts and over decisions of the Board of County Commissioners. Supervises the Jury Commission and the Grand Jury. **16 Judges**, including Drug Court, and 1 magistrate.

- **Drug Court:** Has jurisdiction to handle fourth and fifth degree drug and drug related cases. Refers defendants to the ADAPT program which provides both in-patient and out-patient treatment.

- **Domestic Relations Division:** Deals with family issues: divorce, dissolution of marriage, enforcing spousal, child support and custody. They offer a mediation program, parenting education classes and domestic violence civil protection orders. **3 Judges** and 13 magistrates.

- **Juvenile Court:** Has original jurisdiction over those under 18 who are traffic offenders, delinquent, neglected, or unruly. Deals with paternity, custody and support. **2 Judges** and 26 magistrates.

- **Probate Court Division:** Deals with wills, estates, adoption, guardianship, marriage licenses, name changes and commitment to mental institutions. **1 Judge** and 4 magistrates.

Hamilton County Municipal Court - Six-year terms, staggered, elected by district. Has jurisdiction in civil cases (e.g., auto accidents, neighbor's disputes) involving claims of \$15,000 and under, and in criminal cases involving misdemeanors committed in Hamilton County. Holds traffic court and conducts preliminary hearings in felony cases. **14 Judges** and 6 magistrates.

Mayor's Courts - Have jurisdiction over moving traffic violations and limited criminal jurisdiction in municipal ordinance cases. **36** in Hamilton County.

Small Claims Court - Has jurisdiction in civil cases involving claims of less than \$3,000. Usually

handled by a magistrate.

SAFETY SERVICES

- The 49 **fire departments** serving Hamilton County include municipal, township, special district and independent departments.

Some municipal departments are full time with salaried personnel. The others are mostly part-time or volunteer, with personnel receiving state-accredited training. These fire departments have mutual assistance contracts to improve service in emergencies.

Some departments are community-owned and some are privately operated, working on a contract basis.

- The **Hamilton County Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) Task Force** became operational in 1998 to fill the need for improved technical rescue capability in the county. The Task Force has 105 members from 28 different fire departments, reaching outside Hamilton County to include members from Clermont, Warren and Butler County. All personnel participate in a required training course of 200 hours and receive continuing education in the technical rescue disciplines of: search, structural collapse, trench, confined space, machinery, swift water and high angle rescue. The Hamilton County USAR integrates their efforts with The Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS), Greater Cincinnati Hazardous Materials Team and the local law enforcement community to address the threat of terrorism or naturally occurring disasters.

- The **Hamilton County Communications Center**, with its computer-aided dispatching system, provides public safety communications to communities. These services range from full 911 call processing and dispatch services to providing access to the county's 800 Megahertz Radio System.

Contracting for its services are 45 jurisdictions. The Red Cross, Emergency Management Agency and Cincinnati's Fire Dispatch are connected to the Center's Disaster Radio Network. The 11 communities operating their own radio systems have mutual aid agreements with the Center. Radio contact is also provided with the Sheriff's Patrol, Park Rangers and many police departments.

The Communication Center is connected by high speed communication links to regional, state and federal crime information networks. In addition, a mobile data terminal system serves all public safety entities in the county with data in the vehicles.

- The **Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency** is responsible for coordinating all Homeland Security and emergency response efforts, including: fire, police, emergency medical service, public works, volunteers and other groups contributing to the management of response to and recovery from emergencies.

The agency also administers and coordinates Local Emergency Planning Committee activities in accordance with federal and state laws. (Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act of 1986, SARA Title III Right-To-Know Program).

It works with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and other governmental agencies and response departments to ensure coordinated, effective response to hazardous materials emergencies at the DOE's facilities in Fernald, Ohio.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

HEALTH DISTRICT

Ohio law provides for both city and county health districts, and requires them to provide specified health services. In addition to the Hamilton County General Health District, there are six independent city health districts: Cincinnati, Indian Hill, Norwood, St. Bernard, Sharonville and Springdale.

- **Hamilton County General Health District** The Advisory Council is composed of village mayors, presidents of township trustees and the president of the Board of County Commissioners. The Council meets yearly to conduct business and selects the members of the Board of Health.

- The **Hamilton County Board of Health** is the governing body of the Hamilton County General Health District. Board members are appointed to five-year overlapping terms and at least one member must be a physician. The 5-member Board has the authority to adopt rules and regulations, which have the same status as law, and to enact policies within the Health District. To carry out day-to-day functions, the Board hires a health commissioner.

Hamilton County Board of Health meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Hamilton County General Health District offices.

The Hamilton County General Health District is comprised of seven divisions:

1. **Administration:** The Health Commissioner and staff carry out the orders and regulations of the Board of Health, enforce the Public Health Laws of Ohio and develop programs to meet the needs of the community. Staff provides fiscal management, personnel services and managerial support.
2. **Community Health Information Services:** Informally known as CHIS, this division supplies promotional and public relations support for the Health District programs and services. In addition, health education, injury surveillance, epidemiology and vital statistic (birth/death record) services are provided.
3. **Environmental Health:** Sanitarians ensure regulatory compliance of food establishments, schools, commercial pools and spas, parks, camps and lodgings. Rabies prevention and control are also functions of this division.
4. **Nursing:** Public health nurses provide caring and responsive services through the following programs: Bureau for Children with Medical Handicaps (BCMh), communicable disease follow-up and maternal and child health.
5. **Plumbing:** Certified plumbing inspectors ensure and maintain the safety of the water supply. Staff inspects backflow devices, water heaters, new and remodeled plumbing installations.
6. **Waste Management:** Sanitarians ensure regulatory compliance of five types of waste facilities: compost, construction and demolition debris, infectious waste, solid waste and tire.
7. **Water Quality:** Sanitarians investigate sewage complaints, conduct stream monitoring and inspect new and existing household sewage disposal and private water systems.

HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND PLANNING

- **Hamilton County Hospital Commission** - This commission has 17 members appointed by the county commissioners for 6-year staggered terms. Its purpose is to authorize the sale of tax exempt

revenue bonds for health care construction projects and equipment purchases for non-profit hospitals and long-term care facilities in Hamilton County.

- **Hospitals** - Besides the many private hospitals, three partially tax-supported hospitals serve the county:

1. **University Hospital** is a regional referral center offering a full range of diagnostic and therapeutic services from outpatient primary and specialized care, to 24-hour trauma and emergency service, to inpatient acute and critical care services.

2. **Children's Hospital Medical Center** offers similar services to pediatric patients. A countywide property tax levy of 5.39 mills, approved in 2001, supports the cost of hospital care for medically indigent children and adult residents of the county. These populations are served primarily at University Hospital and Children's Hospital Medical Center.

- 3 **Drake Center Inc.** is a long-term subacute care and rehabilitation facility. Formerly operated by the county as the Drake Memorial Hospital, in 1989 the facility was leased to and is now operated by Drake Center, Inc., a private non-profit corporation affiliated with the University of Cincinnati. It is supported, in part, by a 1.59 mill property tax levy approved by the voters in 1999, which expires in 2004. Its 9-member board of trustees consists of appointees by the University (6) and Hamilton County Commissioners (3).

- **Alcohol & Drug Addiction Services Board** - In partnership with the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS) and the Hamilton County Commissioners, the Board administers funds for local programs. Federal, state and local funds are distributed annually through contracts with a comprehensive network of seventeen alcohol and other drug addiction prevention and treatment provider agencies. Additional funds are provided for special initiatives. The 18-member Board is appointed by the Director of ODADAS (6) and the Board of County Commissioners (12) for 4-year terms.

- **CORVA** - The Health Planning and Resource Development Association of the Central Ohio River Valley is a health planning coalition of local governments and the providers and consumers of health and hospital services. It was formed in 1968. It includes 8 counties in Southwest Ohio. CORVA's three major functions are: develop a health system plan; review hospital capital expenditure projects; provide health care related technical assistance to organizations and individuals in the planning area.

MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL RETARDATION

In 1967 state laws established two types of county boards, sometimes referred to by their legislative bill numbers: the **Hamilton County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities**, or "169 Board" and the **Hamilton County Community Mental Health Board**, or "648 Board."

- Since its inception, the **Hamilton County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MRDD)** has provided support, programs and services offering a full range of educational, vocational and residential experiences to individuals with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. It operates or contracts for services for children and adults and adheres to state and federal rules and regulations.

The Board receives nearly 75% of its operating funds from the Mental Retardation Services Levy. The State of Ohio provides Department of Education unit funding for early childhood and school-age programs and subsidizes transportation costs, while early intervention, adult services and case management services are partially funded by the Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Federal funding includes Title 6 and Title 6B, as well as Title XX and Community

Alternative Funding Sources revenues and the Federal School Lunch Program.

The Board has 7 members, 5 appointed by the Board of County Commissioners and 2 by the Probate Judge for 4-year terms.

- The **Hamilton County Community Mental Health Board** has 18 members, 12 appointed by the Board of County Commissioners and 6 appointed by the Ohio Mental Health Board for 4-year terms. It is charged with coordinating a county wide mental health system.

Acting as an umbrella agency whose function is to plan, fund, coordinate and evaluate mental health services, the Board links together a mental health network designed to provide a wide range of care for the emotionally distressed, the severely mentally disabled and the acutely mentally ill.

The Mental Health Board funds some three dozen agencies which make up the Hamilton County mental health system. These agencies finance mental health programs with federal funds including Medicare, Medicaid and Title XX money; state funds; fees for services based on a subsidy scale; some insurance groups; community chest funds; and the Hamilton County Mental Health Levy.

The board is accountable to the county commissioners and to the Ohio Department of Mental Health.

HAMILTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES

The Hamilton County Department of Human Services changed its name to the **Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services** (HCJFS) in July 2001, when it also received accreditation by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services. HCJFS is the largest combined human services agency in Ohio — that is, welfare, child support and child protection programs all administered by a single organization. Numerous programs mandated by law and supported by federal, state, and local funds are grouped under the HCJFS umbrella. The agency serves 300,000 Hamilton County residents each year.

- **Adult Services:**

- Protective services against abuse, neglect and exploitation of the elderly.
- Transportation for Medicaid clients to medical appointments.
- Services to people with disabilities (Supplemental Security Income case management).
- Mt. Airy Shelter for homeless men (temporary housing).

- **Child Care:**

- HCJFS Child Care Services partially covers the cost of child care for eligible low and moderate-income families. Parents choose from a list of more than 1,500 home providers and centers that have contracts with HCJFS. The homes and centers are certified by Hamilton County or licensed by the state. HCJFS inspects certified homes at least twice a year.

- **Child Support:**

- Establishes and enforces child support orders; modifies child support orders.
- Establishes paternity (and administers paternity tests); provides other customer services.
- Enforces spousal support.

- **Children's Services:**

- Operates 241-KIDS, a 24-hour phone line for reporting suspected abuse or neglect.
- Investigates allegations and transfers cases to Family Services-Ongoing Units when children are found to be at significant risk of serious harm.
- Places children who cannot be safe in their homes in temporary care with relatives, foster parents or

institutional settings. Seeks protective, temporary or permanent custody of children through Juvenile Court.

— Recruits and trains foster and adoptive families. Provides support to foster homes.

— Involves families and community partners in making decisions affecting children. Prepares children for adoption and arranges for post-adoption services to families. Provides training in independent living skills for older teens.

— Provides services to help families. Services include drug abuse treatment, emergency housing, mental health counseling and parent training.

• **Employment Services/Workforce Development:**

— The Southwest Ohio Career Resource Network, for job seekers and employers.

— Building Futures, providing services for young people.

— Community Link, the first stop for welfare recipients on their way to self-sufficiency.

• **Healthy Start, Healthy Families Combined Program Applications:** Formerly known as the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

• **Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP):** Offers teen parents financial incentives and other support needed to finish high school.

• **Medical Services:** Health care services for low-income aged, blind and disabled individuals.

• **Ohio Direction Card:** Electronic food benefit card that replaces paper food stamps.

• **Ohio Works First (OWF):** Federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) provides a temporary support check to low-income families with minor children at home. In Ohio, the TANF program is called Ohio Works First (OWF).

• **Tuberculosis Control:** Full service tuberculosis clinic serving Hamilton County residents.

HAMILTON COUNTY FAMILY AND CHILDREN FIRST COUNCIL

• The **Hamilton County Family and Children First Council** is the primary coordinating body for services for children and families in Hamilton County. Mandated by the state in 1997, it is an organization of almost sixty child serving systems, agencies, parents and community members who are working to coordinate and streamline services for children and families.

The Council has developed substantive projects, such as a hotline for families and children in crisis, a managed care entity to purchase, monitor and broker care for the neediest and costliest youth in the county, a Child Fatality Review Team, which reviews all child deaths in Hamilton County, multiple trainings and workshops for staff of all child serving systems, a program that provides social services to uninsured families with children age 0-3 and a diversion team to prevent unnecessary out of home placements. The Council also publishes a bimonthly newsletter which describes current activities of the Council in particular and children's issues in general.

The Council is overseen by the **Hamilton County Family & Children First Executive Committee**, who sets the agenda for the Council and oversees its progress. The Executive Committee consists of: 1 County Commissioner; 1 Cincinnati City Council member; Cincinnati Public School (CPS) Superintendent; and, representatives from CPS Board of Education, Hamilton County Educational Service Center, Hamilton County Board of Education, Hamilton County Job & Family Services, Children's Hospital, Health District, Alcohol & Drug Addiction Service, Parent Involvement

Committee, Board of Mental Health, Board of MRDD, Juvenile Court, United Way and Community Action Agency.

- **Council on Aging of the Cincinnati Area, Inc.** serves 5 counties. It is one of 12 area agencies on aging in Ohio designated by the Ohio Department of Aging to implement the Older Americans Act of 1965 (amended in 1992).

The Department of Aging allocates federal and state funds to the Council on Aging which contracts with local agencies to provide services to help older persons be as independent as possible in their own homes and communities.

The Council is governed by a Board of Trustees and employs a professional staff under the direction of an Executive Director. An Advisory Council of older adults, business people and service providers helps plan and coordinate services.

The Council is a nonprofit corporation supported by the City of Cincinnati, The National Council on Aging, Inc., the Ohio Department of Aging, United Way and the Hamilton County Elderly Services Levy.

OTHER SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES (DOES)

DOES consists of two divisions: The **Air Quality Management Division** and **Hamilton County Solid Waste Management District** (See Special Districts.)

- The **Air Quality Management Division (AQMD)** works with local, state and federal government agencies, businesses, communities and citizens to achieve and maintain healthy air quality for southwestern Ohio. The AQMD serves Butler, Clermont, Hamilton and Warren counties and is organized into two sections.

- **Permits and Enforcement** coordinates the permitting of all air emissions sources in southwest Ohio, responds to complaints, conducts facility inspections, provides open burning permits and initiates noncompliance enforcement action as a representative of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OhioEPA).

- **Monitoring and Analysis** monitors air pollutants daily. The results are then released to the public in the daily air quality index (AQI). Levels of six criteria pollutants are monitored to determine the region's air quality as it relates to a series of health-based standards. Pollen and mold counts, air toxics levels, anti-tampering inspections, stack observations/validations and emissions inventory programs are also conducted by the Monitoring and Analysis section.

HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

Hamilton County provides housing related services through the following agencies, programs and departments:

- The **Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)** is a political subdivision of the state of Ohio. It provides quality, affordable housing for residents of low-to-moderate income throughout Hamilton County through both a Public Housing and Rental Assistance Program. The Authority is directed by a 5-member governing board. Two are appointed by the mayor of Cincinnati and 1 each by

the Hamilton County Commissioners, Hamilton County Probate Court and Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas for 5-year terms.

CMHA has 6,167 units of public housing, which includes large family communities, scattered-site housing and housing for elderly and disabled. CMHA is the property owner for public housing units and is responsible for leasing, maintenance, rent collection, etc.

The Housing Choice Voucher program is tenant-based. The housing subsidy follows the tenant, allowing them to find rental housing in the private market in a Hamilton County neighborhood of their choice. The Housing Choice Voucher program, which is market-driven, offers a broad range of housing choices and allows low-income residents to integrate more into the mainstream of society.

- **The Affordable Housing Program**, which started in 1996, is a joint effort between CMHA and Hamilton County to provide families with quality housing choices and opportunities, primarily outside the City of Cincinnati. CMHA uses funds provided by the county, combined with bank loans, to purchase and upgrade houses and small apartment complexes in low-poverty neighborhoods. This program includes a mix of assisted and market-rate rental housing. Admissions preferences are given to families who are employed, are full time students, or are receiving some form of disability or retirement income. The families are responsible for maintaining the grounds; CMHA contracts with a private management company for all other property management functions.

- **Hamilton County Home Improvement Program (HIP)** - A program by the Board of County Commissioners and Hamilton County Treasurer. Homeowners in participating Hamilton County communities can get a home improvement loan for alteration, repair, maintenance or improvement of single-family, two-family and multi-family dwellings (three or more units) at 3% below the lowest rate a bank would normally offer. It can also be used for code violation compliance and property upgrades. There are no income restrictions for eligibility. Loans are capped at \$50,000. They are available for single family and two family properties valued up to \$300,000; no property limit on multi-family dwellings.

- **Hamilton County Department of Building Inspections** - A Building Commissioner is appointed by the county commissioners and is certified by the State of Ohio to enforce all provisions of the Ohio Basic Building Code in operating townships and contracting municipalities. The Building Commissioner also enforces the Hamilton County Building Code for 1, 2 and 3 family residences for all unincorporated areas. Adverse decisions by the Building Commissioner may be appealed to the County Board of Building Appeals (5 members appointed by the county commissioners for 5-year terms). This board deals with both the Ohio Basic Building Code and the Hamilton County Building Code. Hamilton County has no housing code.

- **The Hamilton County Development Company (HCDC)** is a private, not-for-profit corporation that promotes economic development in Hamilton County through the administration of three program areas. These include:

1. Administering the Hamilton County Economic Development Office, which oversees tax incentives, business retention and expansion efforts, business district revitalization, brownfield redevelopment and greenfield land development;
2. Business lending through the Small Business Administration 504 and Ohio Regional 166 Loan Programs; and
3. Entrepreneurial development through the Hamilton County Business Center business incubation program and HCDC Microloan Program.

MUSEUM CENTER

Originally built in 1933 as the Union Terminal train station, the building is a national historic landmark. It was renovated and re-opened as the Cincinnati Museum Center in 1990. The Museum Center houses the Cincinnati History Museum, Cinergy Children's Museum, the Museum of Natural History & Science, the Robert D. Lindner Family OMNIMAX® Theater, and the Cincinnati Historical Society Library. More than one million people visit annually and over 700 events are held in the building each year.

PARKS

The **Hamilton County Park District** was established in 1930. A 3-member Board of Park Commissioners, appointed by the Probate Court, sets policy for the district.

At present the Park District provides 18 parks totaling over 14,579 acres. High priority is given to conservation of natural resources and preservation of natural areas. A wide variety of outdoor recreational activities and facilities compatible with land stewardship are provided throughout the year to an estimated 1 million park visitors.

Developed parks with public facilities are Miami Whitewater Forest, Winton Woods, Sharon Woods, Shawnee Lookout, Farbach-Werner Nature Preserve, Woodland Mound Park, Embshoff Woods and Nature Preserve, Triple Creek, Little Miami Golf Center, Lake Isabella Park, Mitchell Memorial Forest and Withrow Nature Preserve. Four parks are conservation and wildlife areas preserved for the delicate balance of nature: Kroger Hills Park, Newberry Wildlife Sanctuary, Oak Glen Natural Preserve and Richardson Forest Preserve.

About 50% of the Park District's annual operating budget comes from various tax sources including a 1 mill 15-year replacement levy which was approved by the voters in 2002. The other 50% is earned by the Park District through revenue-producing activities.

A Motor Vehicle Permit is required to visit the Hamilton County Parks with a cost of \$3.00 for an annual permit, or \$1.00 for a daily permit.

PLANNING AND ZONING

- The **Regional Planning Commission (RPC)** provides advisory planning services to the unincorporated areas (twelve townships) of the county. It also serves 37 county municipalities that are members of the Planning Commission and pay annual fees.

The Commission services include community planning, development review and information services. Commission services are tied to annual work programs that monitor development trends, evaluate current policies and update the Hamilton County Master Plan and related regulations for zoning, subdivision of land and traffic circulation. Land use control responsibilities also include development review for compliance with zoning regulations, subdivision rules and thoroughfare plans as well as consistency with adopted land use plans. Advisory zoning recommendations are made to the Hamilton County Rural Zoning Commission and Board of County Commissioners. The RPC administers and makes final actions on land subdivision and building addresses for all unincorporated areas. It coordinates the multi-agency review of subdivision plans and ensures conformity with the county's regulations.

RPC prepares and disseminates information and maps on a variety of planning related topics. It maintains data files on population, housing, zoning, building activity, U.S. Census, social-economic development, school trends and many physical and land use features.

The Executive Director serves as Secretary to the Regional Planning Commission as well as the Rural Zoning Commission and has general charge of both Commissions. The Regional Planning Commission itself is made up of seven representatives, each appointed for a 5-year term:

- Five representatives appointed by the Board of County Commissioners.
(4 from the unincorporated area, 1 from the incorporated area)
- One elected by the Municipal Planning Committees, and
- One appointed by the Cincinnati Planning Committee.

• **Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) Planning Partnership** is a collaborative planning and coordinating committee of the RPC. The Partnership carries out long range and comprehensive planning duties through non-binding advisory recommendations to the RPC. The Resolution of Cooperation, approved in 2000 by political jurisdictions and planning commissions in Hamilton County, re-established and modified the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission and established the Planning Partnership. This agreement, among other things, improves the Regional Planning Commission structure to enable greater focus on long range planning responsibilities as well as effective stakeholder involvement while sustaining its current or short range planning services in subdivision, zoning, address assignment and other development review services. Three officers are elected annually from member communities – one each from a township, the City of Cincinnati and a municipality exclusive of Cincinnati. The Executive Director of the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission serves as department head and Planning Partnership secretary.

The Planning Partnership's mission is: "to bring together public, private and civic sector organizations engaged in community planning in Hamilton County so that mutual goals related to physical, economic and social issues can be planned for comprehensively and achieved collaboratively."

• **Community COMPASS (Hamilton County's Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategies)** is a planning process begun by the Planning Partnership. COMPASS is a long-range plan that seeks to address mutual goals related to physical, economic and social issues among the 49 communities within Hamilton County. The plan is a collective shared vision for the future based on the voiced concerns and aspirations of thousands of citizens. The Vision for Hamilton County's Future forms the basis for research on trends and indicators to track progress. The Vision is also the basis for initiatives, strategies and action plans – who, how and when the strategies will be implemented. All these components comprise the Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategies.

In developing a broad vision with broad support, Community COMPASS will help ensure that trends are anticipated, challenges are addressed, priorities are focused and the collective future is planned and achieved strategically over the next 20 to 30 years. Through an in-depth analysis of all aspects of the county, the multi-year Community COMPASS process will result in a comprehensive plan – the first such plan for Hamilton County since 1964.

• The **Rural Zoning Commission (RZC)** administers and enforces zoning in eight townships or parts thereof, covering an area of about 80 square miles. The Commission makes recommendations to the Board of Commissioners regarding zone amendments and makes final determination of compliance with conditions approved by the county commissioners. The five members of the RZC are appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. The Executive Director of the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission serves as the department head and commission secretary. A unanimous decision of the Board of County Commissioners is required to deny or modify the recommendation of the Commission. The Zoning Regulations are interpreted and enforced under the office of the County Zoning Inspector.

- **Board of Zoning Appeals** - 5 members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners for 5-year terms. Duties include hearing and authorizing appeals to zoning, granting conditional zoning certificates and revoking building certificates that have unauthorized variances.

- **OKI (Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana) Regional Council of Governments** - Formed in 1964, OKI is the federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the 8 county metropolitan region and is the conduit for federal transportation funding. It is a council of local governments, business organizations and community groups committed to developing collaborative strategies, plans and programs which will improve the quality of life and the economic development potential of the Tri-State. Its 105 members represent governmental, social and civic groups from 198 communities in the eight county, three-state region. OKI provides comprehensive area wide policy development and planning; coordinates local activities with other regional agencies; assists local governments in implementing regional policies, plans and programs; and serves as a regional forum for exchanges of ideas and resolution of conflicts. OKI has a 27-member executive committee elected by the trustees; it is the main decision-making body. There are various advisory committees composed of representatives from government, business and the public. Funding for OKI is provided by member governments and federal grants for specific programs.

PUBLIC LIBRARY

The **Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County**, organized in 1853, was the nation's first metropolitan, county-wide library. It is governed by a 7-member Board of Trustees. Board members are appointed for a term of seven years, the term of one trustee expiring each year. The Board of County Commissioners appoints four members and the Common Pleas judges appoints three. At its January meeting, the Board organizes for the ensuing year and elects a president, vice president, secretary and a clerk. It is responsible for all budgetary and operational decisions, overseeing establishment of all library branches and disposing of special funds such as endowments and grants. The Board of Trustees meets on the second Monday of each month.

The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County consists of the Main Library in downtown Cincinnati and 41 branch libraries. Library cards are free to any Ohio resident and, on a reciprocal basis, to residents of Boone, Campbell and Kenton Counties in Kentucky. Those not eligible for a free library card may pay \$15 annually to receive one.

The library's comprehensive services include reference questions answered by telephone, fax, mail and in person. In addition, the library's on-line catalog, selected databases and computerized index of local news are available through dial access. Three outreach departments serve those with special needs: Exceptional Children serves children who cannot use traditional services; Institution/Books-by-Mail delivers collections to nursing homes, retirement communities, corrections facilities and school classrooms; the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped serves Ohio's 33 southern counties through personalized service by mail.

Ohio's public libraries are funded, in large part, through the Library and Local Government Support Fund (LLGSF). Money for the LLGSF comes from 5.7% of personal income tax collections. The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County receives 95% of its annual budget from the LLGSF. The balance comes from fees, fines and endowments.

SANITATION

- The **Department of Public Works** regulates storm water management, flood control, water line installation, capital improvement projects and earth movement activities throughout all the unincorporated areas of Hamilton County. It reviews, approves and inspects all new development. It also investigates storm water drainage concerns within the unincorporated county limits.

- The **Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO)** is an interstate water pollution control agency established by Compact in 1948. The eight-member states - Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia - pledge to cooperate in the control of water pollution within the Ohio River Basin. A guiding principle of the Compact is that pollution originating in one state shall not injuriously affect the waters of another state.

The Commission operates programs for water quality monitoring and assessment, spill response and detection, pollution control standards and public information and education. ORSANCO also coordinates activities and facilitates an exchange of information and technology among water pollution control and natural resources agencies of the member states.

SEWAGE TREATMENT

- The **Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSD)**, a special district established in 1968, was the first such district in Ohio; it includes all unincorporated areas of Hamilton County and all municipalities except Harrison, Glendale and Terrace Park. The county commissioners are responsible for its operating budget, as well as capital budget and rates. The Cincinnati Department of Sewers designs, constructs, operates and maintains sewers and waste water treatment facilities under contract with Hamilton County. Sewer operations are financed primarily from user service charges and surcharges. Construction costs of local area sewers and laterals are generally financed by assessments and other sources.

The MSD is a department of the City of Cincinnati. The District provides wastewater removal and treatment for over 800,000 customers throughout Cincinnati and Hamilton County. The area MSD serves includes 33 municipalities and unincorporated areas covering more than 400 square miles. Over 200,000 separate sewer connections tie into MSD's 3,000 plus miles of sanitary and combined sewers.

The sewer district has 6 major treatment plants: Mill Creek, Little Miami, Muddy Creek, Polk Run, Sycamore and Taylor Creek. There are also 25 package treatment plants that treat sewage in certain areas of the county. These secondary treatment facilities meet federal and state water pollution control requirements.

The **Combined Sewer Overflow Strategy Development and Facilities Plan** represents a comprehensive review of the impacts of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in Hamilton County and a plan for their resolution. CSOs are the discharge or "overflow" of combined rainwater and sewage into rivers, streams and creeks during heavy rainfalls.

TRANSPORTATION

Major traffic between the north central states and the south passes through Hamilton County by rail, highway, air and water.

- **Transportation Improvement District (TID)** - The District was formed in 1995 by the Board of County Commissioners, in accordance with Section 5540 of the Ohio Revised Code, to administer and provide assistance with complex transportation projects involving multiple jurisdictions and multiple modes of transportation. Its purpose is to develop, finance, construct, maintain, repair and operate transportation projects.

TID funding is generated from multiple sources. Administrative funding is primarily provided through an Ohio Department of Development Roadwork Development Grant. Project funding is provided by the state and/or local sponsors of the various TID projects.

The 5-member board of trustees includes the three members of the Board of County Commissioners, the County Engineer and a member to be jointly appointed by the county commissioners and engineer. Board members hold office for a 2-year term.

• **Roads and Bridges** - The county road system has 294 roads totaling 505 centerline miles (in the county as a whole there are over 1,157 land miles of roads). The county is responsible for 458 bridges. The county engineer has charge of building, rebuilding, improving, maintaining and repairing all bridges and roads within the county jurisdiction, and implements county traffic control in the unincorporated areas. The county engineer is the engineer for the townships.

The principal source of funds is motor vehicle license taxes levied by the state. The remainder comes from the county's share of state gasoline taxes and various other sources.

• **Public Transit**

SORTA (Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority), is a tax-supported, independent political subdivision of the State of Ohio. SORTA operates Metro fixed-route bus service and Access paratransit service for people whose disabilities prevent their riding Metro buses. It plans and proposes new and improved transit for the region.

SORTA is governed by a 9-member Board of Trustees appointed by the Hamilton County Commissioners for 3-year terms. Four members of the SORTA board are recommended by Cincinnati City Council. The relationship between SORTA and the City of Cincinnati is established by the City/SORTA Agreement of 1973.

Approximately half of SORTA's operating budget is provided by a dedicated 0.3% of the City of Cincinnati earnings tax. The earnings tax is paid by everyone who works in the City, regardless of where they live. The City has estimated that more than 50% of this tax is paid by people who live outside the City. Other sources of funding include: federal and state monies, fares, Cincinnati Public Schools contract and miscellaneous income.

WATER

Hamilton County residents enjoy some of the world's most potable water from two major sources; water drawn from the Ohio River with treatment that includes granular activated carbon, and water drawn from wells in the Great Miami Aquifer. Both sources are provided by the Cincinnati Water Works under contract with the county. The current 30-year contract was agreed to in 1987.

Water quality is assured through constant monitoring and testing by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, which monitors all municipal water treatment facilities. Privately owned wells are tested by local health departments. State law requires fluoridation of public water supplies.

ZOO

The **Cincinnati & Botanical Garden** opened in 1875. The original Zoological Society of Cincinnati was a for-profit corporation. In 1899, a non-profit Cincinnati Zoological Company was formed to operate the Zoo. In 1917, Mrs. Mary Emery and Mrs. Anna Sinton Taft, purchased the Zoo after the Cincinnati Transaction Company was no longer able to finance it. In 1932, the Zoo was purchased by the City of Cincinnati and a new management organization was formed, the present day Zoological Society of Cincinnati.

The Zoo has close relationships with public and private schools. In recent years conservation education has played an ever-increasing role. Zoo education programs reach more than 120,000 students on Zoo grounds each year and more than 90,000 students are visited in their classrooms by Zoo naturalists and

animals.

The Board of Trustees of the Zoological Society of Cincinnati has thirty-two members; 26 Trustees are elected by the members of the Society, 3 are appointed by the Cincinnati City Council and 3 are appointed by the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners. Trustees serve for 3-year terms.

EDUCATION

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Hamilton County is divided into 22 school districts of 3 types: city, exempted village and local, serving a total student population of over 120,000 students. In addition there is a county district and a joint vocational district.

- **County District** - The Hamilton County Educational Service Center, an agency of the state educational system, functions as an area center for educational leadership and services to all districts in Hamilton County (except the City of Cincinnati Public Schools) and to Mason City Schools. Although program development and professional enrichment are foremost, these services include auxiliary services to non-public schools; psychological testing; classes for the physically, developmentally and behaviorally handicapped; unified supply purchasing; data processing, technical assistance; legal services and serving as fiscal agents for state and federal programs.

The Educational Services Center's 5-member board of governors, elected at large by voters of the 7 local districts, appoints the county superintendent of schools. The board has no authority to propose tax levies or bond issues, but gets 11.86% of its almost \$28 million budget (2002-2003) from the State Department of Education, 79.57% from the 7 local districts and other districts, 8.57% from city and county agreements. Services as fiscal agents account for \$23 million. Those funds are not a part of general operating funds.

It is the second largest county school system in Ohio in terms of pupils and has the largest budget.

- **Local Districts** - The 6 local districts, Finneytown, Forest Hills, Northwest, Oak Hills, Southwest and Three Rivers are most closely associated with the Hamilton County Educational Service Center. Each district elects its own 5-member board of education and may submit tax levies and bond issues to voters.

- **City and Exempted Village Districts** - The county's 15 city districts and one exempted village district are directly responsible to the State Board of Education. Many of these districts overlap municipal boundaries. Their boards of education have 5 to 7 members. These districts also have the authority to place bond issues and tax levies before the voters.

- **Vocational District** - The Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development Joint Vocational School District includes 36 school districts in 12 counties. Twenty-two of the 36 school districts are in Hamilton County. The 36 Boards of Education select a 35-member vocational district board. Four vocational centers opened in 1972-73 with 2 centers located in Hamilton County, Scarlet Oaks and Diamond Oaks. The district operates on an annual budget of \$80 million but \$50 million are general funds. District voters renewed a 2.7 mill 10-year tax levy in 1998.

- **Charter/Community Schools** - In Ohio, charter schools are called "community" schools to

differentiate them from state chartered private schools. Charter/community schools are independent public schools that are not part of a school district. They must be nonsectarian and may not discriminate in their student selection. They may not charge tuition or ignore laws pertaining to health, safety and civil rights. However, they are completely autonomous and as such, relieved of some of the restrictions that govern regular public schools.

Community schools are funded with public tax dollars: the State's per pupil allocation, Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid (DPIA)/Title I, special education funds where applicable and federal grants for start-up. DPIA/Title I funds are dispensed to community schools at the same rate as they are allocated to the Cincinnati Public Schools. The amount of DPIA/Title I funds a school receives depends upon the number of enrolled students who meet poverty guidelines.

Community schools do not operate under the local school district's school board. Each community school has its own board and is held accountable through the contract it has with the organization that sponsors it. Their accountability is to the Ohio Board of Education, which evaluates the school's performance and determines whether the contract should be renewed or terminated.

Community schools were first authorized by the Ohio state legislature in 1997. They were originally authorized in the eight large urban school districts. Legislation signed in early 2003 permits their establishment in 21 urban districts and in those districts where public schools fall into the academic emergency or academic watch categories.

Copies of Know Hamilton County may be ordered from
The League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area Education Fund
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